

Protecting the water resources on Nantucket Island
Marine & Coastal Resource Department
Tracy Curley, Town Biologist
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The nature of living on an island is there are finite natural resources. In order to coexist with nature, we must work to support the ecosystem rather than degrade it. Every resident of Nantucket lives within a watershed area. Our actions within the watershed are contributing to the quality of groundwater, harbors, streams and ponds. Our actions within our watershed directly affect water quality and our way of life. Nantucket has a single source aquifer. Precipitation filters through our sandy soils to recharge the aquifer. Anything we put on or under the ground eventually finds its way to our wells. To protect the harbors, ponds, and groundwater, the following actions are recommended.

1. Pump your septic system every year. The cost ranges from \$100-\$200. IF you are a seasonal resident, have your system pumped at the end of the season.
2. Do not use bleach. Bleach, whose final destination is your septic tank, kills the good bacteria, which process your waste.
3. If you are a seasonal resident, "jump start" your septic system with microbe-lift. Microbe-lift can be used every 6 months to assist bacteria in breaking down fat, hair, and waste. Cost \$15 @ Plumbers Supply or Corcoran, etc.
4. Use phosphate free laundry and dishwasher detergent. Available at grocery stores.
5. Maintain vegetated buffers around property. Natural vegetation reduces nutrient loads to harbor and ponds. The law requires a 25ft undisturbed vegetated buffer from the fringe of any resource area, i.e. the pond or harbor. The greater the buffer area, the more protection is afforded to the resource area.
6. Use plants that do not require much fertilizer and are drought resistant.
7. Use environmentally friendly cleaning agents and/or methods such as baking soda, vinegar, soap & water, boiling water, a plunger, metal snake, elbow grease, etc.
8. If watering lawn or garden, water early in morning or late in evening to minimize evaporation. Approximately 1" of water per week should soak 6-8" into soil.
9. IF you must fertilize, do not use more than 3lbs per thousand square feet and only apply in spring. Use lawn fertilizers that contain a high ratio of slow release forms of nitrogen. Do not assume all organic fertilizers are slow release.
10. Dispose of hazard waste properly at Nantucket Landfill to prevent groundwater contamination.
11. Have your well tested every two years to track constituents in your drinking water.
12. Refrain from tarring your driveways. Impervious surfaces increase surface runoff, decrease recharge ability of groundwater, and can contain petroleum products or heavy metals.
13. Do not dispose of anything down storm drains. Storm drains are a direct discharge to the harbor.